

Krasiński, Zygmunt

Napoleon Stanisław Adam Feliks Zygmunt Krasiński, more commonly known as Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–1859), was one of the Three Bards of Poland, the nation's greatest national poets or *wieszczowie* (poet-prophets) of the Romantic period – the other two being Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki. Some speak of Poland's Four Bards, adding Cyprian Norwid to the list; notably, all four were Roman Catholics. The Bible exerted a profound influence upon his literary art throughout his career as a writer.

Krasiński was born and died in Paris. His father, Wincenty Krasiński (1782–1858), was a general in Napoleon's army, and his mother, Maria Urszula Radziwiłł (Radziwiłłówna), was a Polish princess. Zygmunt Krasiński, in addition to being a poet, was an aristocrat, philosopher, dramatist, novelist, prolific epistolist, and the first Ordinate in the largest land estate in Opinogóra, near Ciechanów.

He debuted as a writer in 1828, publishing macabre gothic novels. He showed in this work the constant, characteristic elements of his writing, so his obsessions over the suffering and massacre of

Polish civilians (e.g., by the Russian army at the time of Kościuszko's Insurrection), the interior turmoil of the Romantic national struggle for Poland's independence. This spiritual conflict resulted in his prolific literary production full of frenzy, frenetic images of hell, madness, and the sharp dissonances of his religious and social contexts.

Krasiński studied law at the Warsaw Imperial University (1827–29) but was expelled after refraining from participation in the patriotic Polish demonstrations in Warsaw against the Russian occupation. Subsequently he studied in Geneva (1829–30), where he met Mickiewicz and became familiar with the literature and ideas of Western European Romanticism. In 1832 he returned to Poland, from where accompanied his father on a trip to Petersburg, the capital of Russia. There, he wrote the first version of Polish drama entitled *Irydion* (1832).

Krasiński subsequently was permitted to travel abroad to Vienna receive therapy for his ailing eyes. There, in 1833, he wrote the most important work, *Nie-Boska Komedja* (*The Undivine Comedy*), published anonymously in 1835 in Paris. Inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*, this drama reflects Krasiński's modern, historical-philosophical concept of tragedy, "tragizm" (tragedism), portraying the social revolution as a negative, destructive force that would destroy the aristocracy in a future massacre. In his opinion, tragedy is the extermination of two completely radically different "partial points of view," which (like Hegel's thesis and antithesis) are reconciled through the synthesis, a universal rationale, the Absolute: Jesus Christ. *The Undivine Comedy*, reflecting Krasiński's biblical inspiration, expresses of both the original vision of Jesus and the vision of the cross. One of the heroes of *Undivine Comedy* is a child, Orcio, a boy probably of poetic genius, with the power of true poetic creativity. An alter ego of Krasiński himself, he has a weak psychological construction, existing on the border of the spiritual world of the souls of the dead and the reality of the living. The physical aspect of his suffering is blindness, which the Bible associates with divine activity – e.g., the blind innocent Tobit (Tob 2:10; 7:7), or Jesus healing the blind (e.g., Matt 9:27–31; 20:29–34).

The *Undivine Comedy*'s fourth part presents the struggle of two armies or "camps." Aristocrats, collected in the Holy Trinity trenches, are cowardly and egoistic. After the revolutionists triumph, their leader, called "Pankracy" (Pancratius), has vision of Christ. Pankracy is killed, after exclaiming: "*Gallae vici!*" (You have won, Galilaen!). This last scene of Krasiński's drama, esteemed by many as one of the greatest of all Romantic dramas, expressed his providentialism.

From 1833–35, Krasiński wrote in Rome the last version of his Romantic drama, *Irydion* (published anonymously in Paris, 1836). This drama

presents as a sin, from a NT, Christian, ethical viewpoint, the vengeance taken by the main hero on the enemy (ancient Rome). Behind the ancient mask (i.e., Rome's fall) is presented also a contemporary history of Poland (with Moscow figuring as a "third Rome," and Russia as Poland's main enemy, but with the message that the Poles should not take revenge). Through its presentation of Christianity's role, *Irydion* became an apology for spiritual activity and Christian suffering, depicting what the Polish Romantics spoke of metaphorically as the "resurrection from the labor of all the centuries," as well as the spiritual motives of the human soul in the context of Christian ethics, and the struggle of the subjugated nation against its oppressors.

Irydion, though it reflected a change in Krasiński's views on society (toward organic conservatism and Roman Catholic, universal ethics), was read by Poles as a work about their national struggle for independence at a time when Poland was triply partitioned between Germany, Austria, and Russia. The drama resulted from the popular Polish Romantic messianic idea discussed presently below.

From 1839–46 Krasiński wrote *O stanowisku Polski z Bożych i ludzkich względów* (About Poland's stand for the sake of Divine and human reasons), which draws the persona of the biblical God into association with human, Polish, and actual contemporary affairs. In 1840 Krasiński began to conceptualize his long poem *Przedświt* (*Predawn*), which was published under the pseudonym K. Gaszyński in 1843, in Paris. This poem reflects his distinctly Polish messianic conviction that "dead" (i.e., partitioned) Poland would inevitably be "resurrected" (i.e., regain national independence) by the messiah, and, as a Christian nation, would "live again," as Jesus Christ after his resurrection.

In 1844 Krasiński published in Paris the polemic work, *O prawdach żywotnych narodu polskiego* (About the alive truths of Polish nation), composed from an antirevolutionary point of view against the philosopher and economist Henryk Michał Kamiński (1813–1866). Also, in his biblically-entitled lyrical piece, *Psalm miłości* (Psalm of love), citing the ideal of Christian love, Krasiński opposed Kamiński's revolutionary social espousal of the execution of Polish noblemen by the Polish peasants. However, when Kamiński was arrested by the Germans, Krasiński defended him, on the gospel principle of "loving one's enemies" (e.g., Matt 5:44), as a Christian and a Pole.

During his travel through Polish lands, Krasiński created the cycle of biblically-inspired lyrical poems entitled *Psalm przyszłości* (Psalms of the future), published in Paris in 1845 under the pseudonym Spirydion Prawdzicki. These three psalms are based on the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and love, but their real subject is the evolution of the human being's creative spiritual development.

In this work, Krasiński was inspired by the biblical form of the Psalms, but he also extols the importance of the role of the Polish nobility and aristocracy in the history of the Polish nation, glorifies feudalism, and opposes social revolution, advocating instead the Christian idea of social solidarity and love of all social classes – rather than the notion of one class opposed to the other.

After the local Polish Uprising in 1846 against German occupation in the region of Wielkopolska (Great Poland), Krasiński wrote some texts on the event: e.g., the Polish poem entitled in Latin *Resurrecturis* (1851, Resurrected), which describes the idea of Poland's christlike resurrection in the process of armed uprising – which may also be linked metaphorically with the rebellion of the ancient Maccabees, recounted in the deuterocanonical scriptures named after them.

The year 1847 marks the start of the most deeply Christian period of Krasiński's life and literary creativity, grounded in a zealous messianic ideal, a fervent, gospel literary voice, and expressive of an evangelical love of God and all humanity.

Krasiński's *Legenda z Trzech myśli* (A legend of three ideas) involves the concept of the *przechrystusowanie* or “super-Christianization,” the moulding of a human being according the model of Christ. Krasiński's over-Christianization is something like “divination” in Christian theology, so divination of the human being by Christ, making the human divine, in Greek: θεώωσις. In Krasiński's idea a human being who is “super-Christianized” (*przechrystusowany*) becomes like Christ in co-suffering on earth and through future eschatological co-resurrection. There is no proper term in English for this process of fulfilling a human being by Christ.

Krasiński, like Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and Norwid, was fascinated with the notion of sanctity or holiness (*świętość*). In their literary works, all four writers used many figures and symbols connected with religious, spiritual, Christian, or biblical sources. Krasiński's religious, Christian ideas were selected from his works and published together after his death, as *Myśli pobożne* (1899, Pious ideas). There are many motifs from the Bible, particularly the Gospels, in his works, and antiquity and Christianity are also very important in them, as he created a Christian vision of all history. The liturgical and ritual Christian dimensions of Romantic mystery in Krasiński's *Un-Divine Comedy* have been deeply researched in by Polish philologists, who have also analyzed both the orthodox and the heterodox Christian points of view in his works.

Bibliography. Primary: ■ Krasiński, Z., *Myśli pobożne* (Warsaw 1899). ■ Krasiński, Z., *Irydion* (trans. F. Noyes; ed. G. R. Noyes; London 1927; ET of id., *Irydion* [1836] (Wrocław 1989). ■ Krasiński, Z., *Modlitwy* (Warsaw 1920). [Esp. 67] ■ Krasiński, Z., *The Un-divine Comedy* (trans. H. E. Kennedy/ Z. Umińska; Westport, Conn. 1976). [Esp. xvii, 1, 3, 111]

Secondary: ■ Cieślak, S., *Trójca romantyczna: fascynacje świętością* (Warsaw 2015). ■ Gardner, M. M., *The Anonymous Poet of Poland* (Cambridge, Mass. 1919). ■ Jagodzińska, J., *Misterium romantyczne: Liturgiczno-rytualne wymiary świata przedstawionego w III części Dziadów Adama Mickiewicza, Nie-Boskiej komedii Zygmunta Krasińskiego i Księdzu Marku Juliusza Słowackiego* (Toruń 2006). ■ Lednicki, W. (ed.), *Zygmunt Krasiński, Romantic Universalist: An International Tribute* (New York 1964). [Esp. 228] ■ Maciejewski, M., “Biblia,” *Słownik literatury polskiej XIX wieku* (ed. J. Bachórza/A. Kowalczyk; Wrocław ²1994) 81–92. ■ Pieróg, S., “Mesjanizm,” in *Słownik literatury polskiej XIX wieku* (ed. J. Bachórza/A. Kowalczyk; Wrocław ²1994) 536–40. ■ Siennicki, J., *Chrześcijańska wizja dziejów w pismach Zygmunta Krasińskiego* (Lublin 2002). ■ Sudolski, Z., “Krasiński Zygmunt,” *Encyklopedia katolicka* 9 (ed. B. Migut; Lublin 2002) 1209–11. ■ Śliwiński, M., *Antyk i chrześcijaństwo w twórczości Zygmunta Krasińskiego* (Ślupsk 1986).

Marek Mariusz Tytko